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The Pros and Cons of the Bombing  
of North Vietnam

I. Positive Effects of Bombing

A. Manpower Drain

1. The air strikes have tied up ~~at least~~ <sup>from</sup> 600,000 <sup>-700,000</sup> North

Vietnamese people. The major categories are:

a. About ~~220,000~~ <sup>350,000</sup> full-time and 100,000 <sup>-200,000</sup> part-time  
~~220,000~~ <sup>220,000</sup>

workers diverted to repair, reconstruction, and dispersal and transport programs.

b. About 150,000 persons involved in part-time civil defense activities.

c. About 83,000 military personnel, or 20 percent of North Vietnam's military strength, are directly engaged in air defense activities; an additional 27,500 personnel are indirectly involved.

d. An estimated 20,000-25,000 personnel are directly involved in full-time coastal defense duties.

2. These diversions of manpower have limited North Vietnam's capability for sustained large-scale conventional military operations against North Vietnam.

3. The diversions of manpower have also contributed substantially to a shortfall of from 5 to 10 percent in agricultural production and caused sharp increases in North Vietnam's food import requirements.

4. The North Vietnamese population has sustained from 36,000 to 38,000 casualties, of whom about 12,000 were military personnel. Most of the civilian casualties are of a war-related nature, involving personnel directly engaged in bomb repair activities, truck drivers, and persons participating in military logistic movements.

B. Physical Damage to Military Targets

1. Air attacks have destroyed or inactivated significant percentages of total national capacity in direct military or war supporting target categories. These include:

<u>Target Category</u>	<u>% of Capacity Destroyed</u>
Barracks	23
Ammunition Depots	69
Petroleum Storage	55
Electric Power	30-45
Explosives Manufacturing	71
Radar Sites	43

2. Additional significant destruction of airfields, naval bases, SAM sites, bridges, and communication facilities has taken place.

C. Economic Effects

1. The cost of repairing the damage caused by air attacks exceeds \$215 millions, of which over \$80 million represents destruction of military equipment and supplies. Economic losses include not only repair costs of direct physical damage to transportation equipment, bridges, and electric power plants but also heavy indirect losses stemming from the reduction of agricultural output, the impairment of foreign exchange earnings due to the inability to continue normal exports and the expense of passive defense measures.

2. Estimated losses in agricultural production and the fishing industry total over \$30 million. Although the food situation is not yet critical, rice production was 300,000 tons below average in 1966; this deficit will create additional problems for the regime and will require more food imports from other Communist countries. North Vietnam has been forced to cut back on some of its processed food exports.

3. Export losses attributable to the bombings total over \$15 million, an amount equivalent to about one-third of North Vietnam's usual annual export earnings of hard currencies.

4. The cost of over 20,000 units of transport equipment destroyed or damaged by air attacks is between \$35-40 million. North Vietnam has had to increase the number of transport workers by 50,000 and to commit one-fourth of its truck inventory in the effort to

The major losses of transport equipment are as follows:

<u>Equipment</u>	<u>Destroyed</u>	<u>Damaged</u>
Vessels	4,451	8,233
Vehicles	2,548	2,377
Railroad Stock	1,508	1,859

5. The air attacks have inflicted high costs in the maintaining of supplies for the Communist forces in Laos and South Vietnam. North Vietnam has had to increase the number of transport workers by 50,000 and to commit one-fourth of its truck inventory in the effort to maintain distribution and logistic activities at required levels. It is estimated that at least 3,000 truck drivers alone have been lost as a result of air attacks. The inability to move goods in daytime has reduced the operating efficiency of its truck park by at least 50 percent and has at least doubled if not tripled the time required to transport goods. We estimate that losses in transit due to spoilage pilferage and air attack have amounted from 20-40 percent of total traffic volume.

6. The air attacks have forced North Vietnam to undertake a program to disperse industry which has disrupted normal economic production and aggravated the management and administration of economic activity.

7. The disruption caused by air interdiction of the transport system and electric power facilities, plus the dislocation of manpower, has required the indefinite postponement of Ho Chi Minh's plan to build North Vietnam into a modern industrial state. As the war continues, the industrial damage mounts, the time when North

Vietnam can hope to have a modern industrial sector is pushed progressively farther into the future. If Hanoi fails to react, a continuation of the air attacks will deal a most serious blow to their hopes for economic progress and status, nullifying a decade of intense effort and sacrifice on the part of the people.

D. Effect of Abandonment of Bombing on Hanoi's Attitude

Hanoi would regard the abandonment of bombing its territory as clear-cut major victory. It would believe that, by propaganda and political pressure, it has forced the United States to take this action. Hanoi's belief in ultimate victory would be strengthened; it would be greatly encouraged that the United States would ultimately tire of the war. Almost certainly, the North Vietnamese would not interpret a halt to the bombing as an act of U.S. de-escalation, but as a sign that its policy was forcing the United States to retreat.

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## II. The Negative Effects of the Bombing

### 1. Costs of Operation

The air campaign against North Vietnam is an expensive undertaking. In 1966, direct operating costs, which do not allow for maintaining air bases and the aircraft carriers, or for logistic support, amounted to about \$1.25 billion, broken down as follows:

	<u>Million U. S. \$</u>	
	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>
Aircraft lost	305.8	605.6
Sortie overhead	98.0	330.4
Ordnance	<u>56.2</u>	<u>311.5</u>
Total	460.0	1,247.5

### 2. The Offsetting Effects of Communist Aid

North Vietnam's apparent willingness to withstand the effects of continued air attack is explained in large measure by the assistance rendered by other Communist countries. Total economic and military aid deliveries in 1966 amounted to at least \$505 million or almost four times the cost of measurable damage resulting from the air attack. The Communist countries have provided increasing amounts of technical assistance in the repair of bomb damaged facilities and there is a tacit implication that they have committed themselves to underwrite the eventual reconstruction of North Vietnam's industrial base.

3. Innocent Civilian Casualties

While the air attacks on North Vietnam have been directed solely at military and war supporting targets, it is true that there have been, regrettably, some unfortunate civilian casualties. Careful planning by U.S. force commanders has held this total down to a small figure. Nevertheless, Hanoi, its Communist sympathizers around the world, and many well-meaning people in other countries have had a propaganda field day with the handful of authentic cases of innocent civilian casualties. This has hurt the image of the United States.

4. Adverse Third Country Attitudes

While there is considerable support for the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, there is strong opposition to these air attacks in certain neutral countries. This opposition seems to stem from fear that the war may become a world-wide conflict, or that the U.S. is guilty of "aggression" against a weaker Asiatic state. Specific nations in opposition include India, France, and important segments of public opinion in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Japan.

5. Air Campaign a "Failure"

Finally, the air campaign is frequently criticized because it hasn't stopped the infiltration of men and supplies into South Vietnam. But as Secretary McNamara has made clear, we never believed that it would. Air attack against military targets in the north was designed to make Hanoi pay a high price for continuing its infiltration, and we believe it has done this.